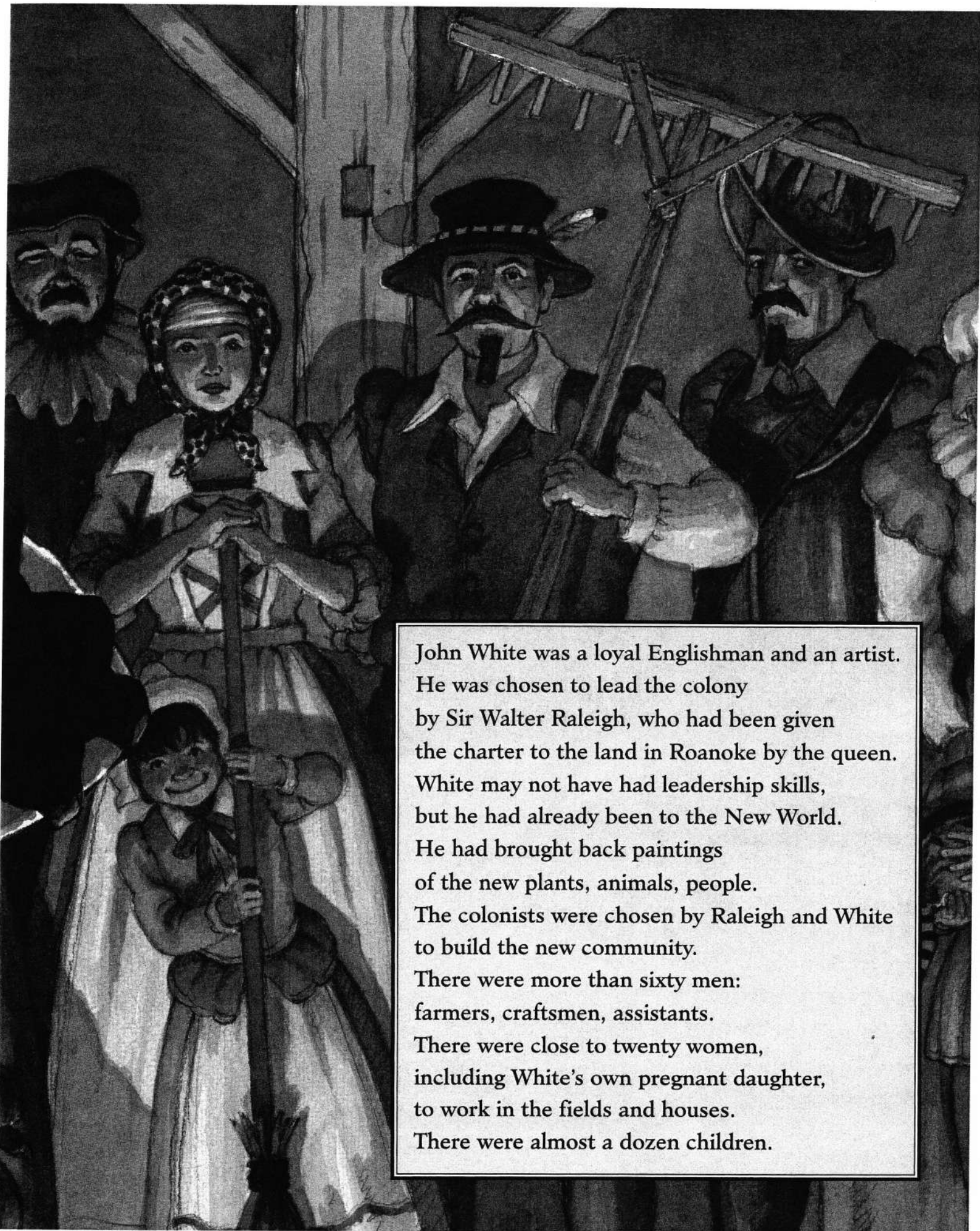
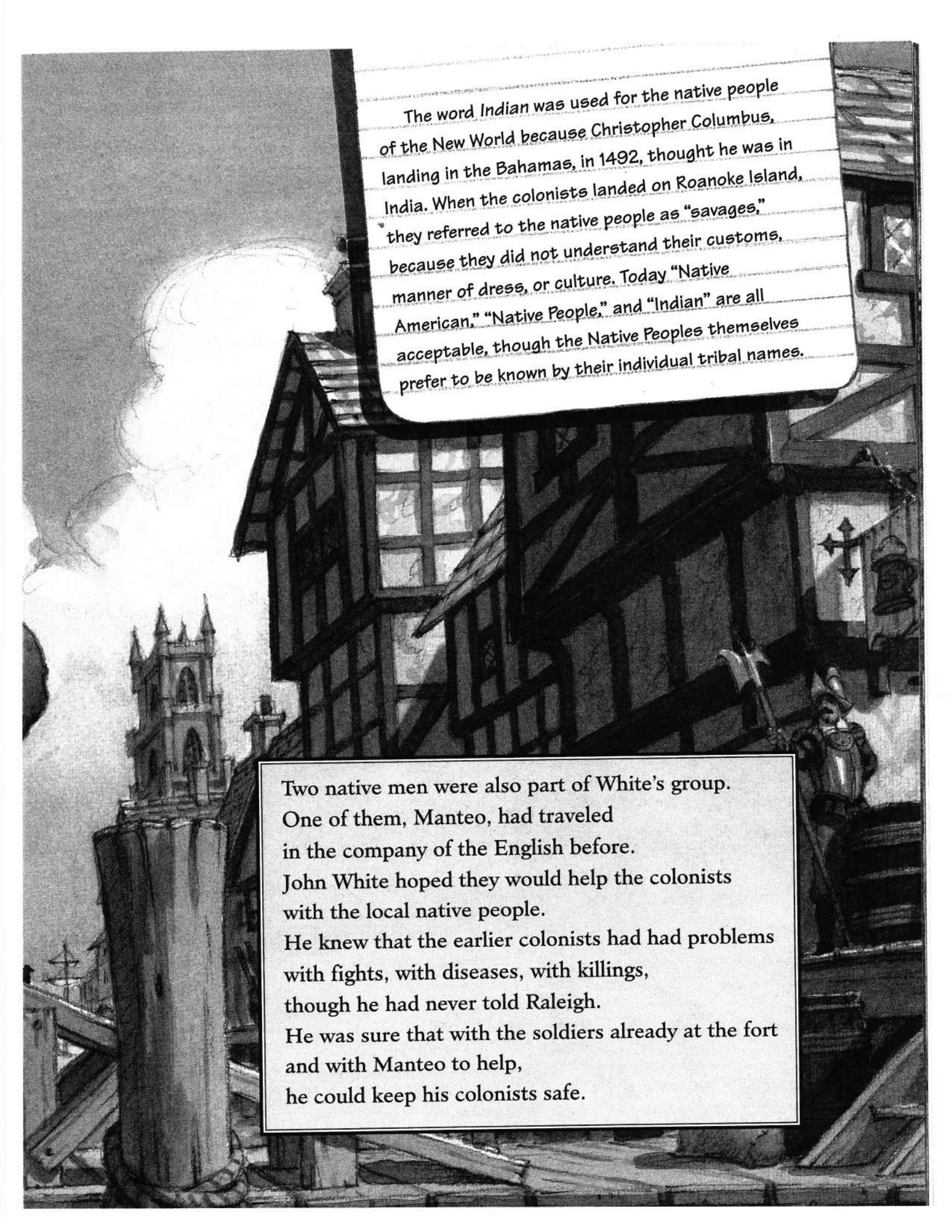


In the year 1587, England and Spain were at war. A major battleground was the New World. Along the east coast, forts were scattered, the one at Roanoke manned by English soldiers. An early colony of 108 men, complaining about the harsh conditions and lack of supplies, had returned home. They had been poorly prepared for life in the New World and had depended upon the native people for food while treating them badly. There had been frequent fights and the colonists had accidentally infected the native people with European diseases. A native chief had been slaughtered. This was not a good way to begin a new settlement. New soldiers had arrived at the abandoned fort to hold it until new colonists could arrive. And colonists were sure to come—the lure of gold and farmland were too strong for any complaints to matter.

COLONY/COLONISTS: a group of settlers in a new country who are still subjects of their mother country

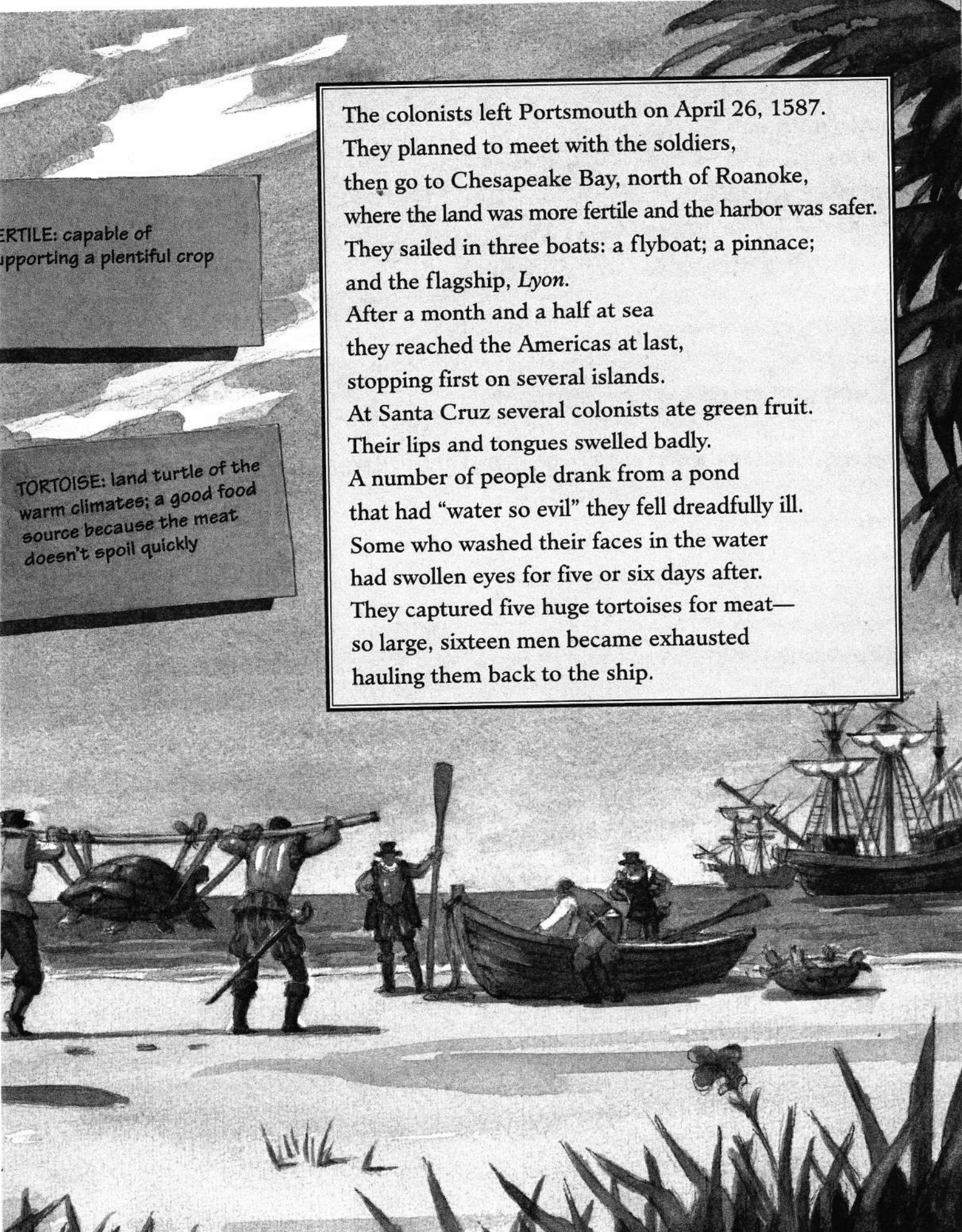


John White was a loyal Englishman and an artist. He was chosen to lead the colony by Sir Walter Raleigh, who had been given the charter to the land in Roanoke by the queen. White may not have had leadership skills, but he had already been to the New World. He had brought back paintings of the new plants, animals, people. The colonists were chosen by Raleigh and White to build the new community. There were more than sixty men: farmers, craftsmen, assistants. There were close to twenty women, including White's own pregnant daughter, to work in the fields and houses. There were almost a dozen children.



The word Indian was used for the native people of the New World because Christopher Columbus, landing in the Bahamas, in 1492, thought he was in India. When the colonists landed on Roanoke Island, they referred to the native people as "savages," because they did not understand their customs, manner of dress, or culture. Today "Native American," "Native People," and "Indian" are all acceptable, though the Native Peoples themselves prefer to be known by their individual tribal names.

Two native men were also part of White's group. One of them, Manteo, had traveled in the company of the English before. John White hoped they would help the colonists with the local native people. He knew that the earlier colonists had had problems with fights, with diseases, with killings, though he had never told Raleigh. He was sure that with the soldiers already at the fort and with Manteo to help, he could keep his colonists safe.



FERTILE: capable of
supporting a plentiful crop

TORTOISE: land turtle of the
warm climates; a good food
source because the meat
doesn't spoil quickly

The colonists left Portsmouth on April 26, 1587. They planned to meet with the soldiers, then go to Chesapeake Bay, north of Roanoke, where the land was more fertile and the harbor was safer. They sailed in three boats: a flyboat; a pinnace; and the flagship, *Lyon*.

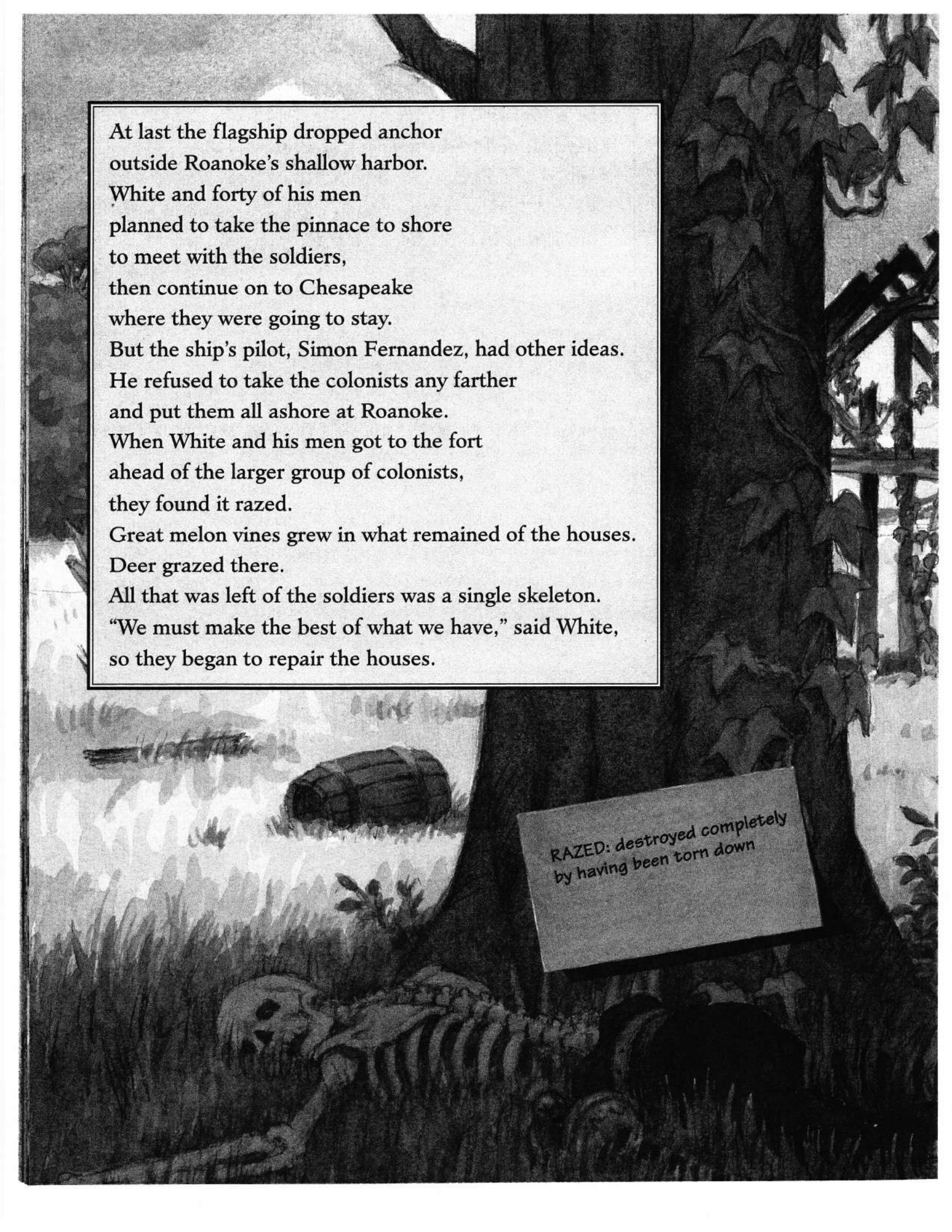
After a month and a half at sea they reached the Americas at last, stopping first on several islands.

At Santa Cruz several colonists ate green fruit. Their lips and tongues swelled badly.

A number of people drank from a pond that had "water so evil" they fell dreadfully ill.

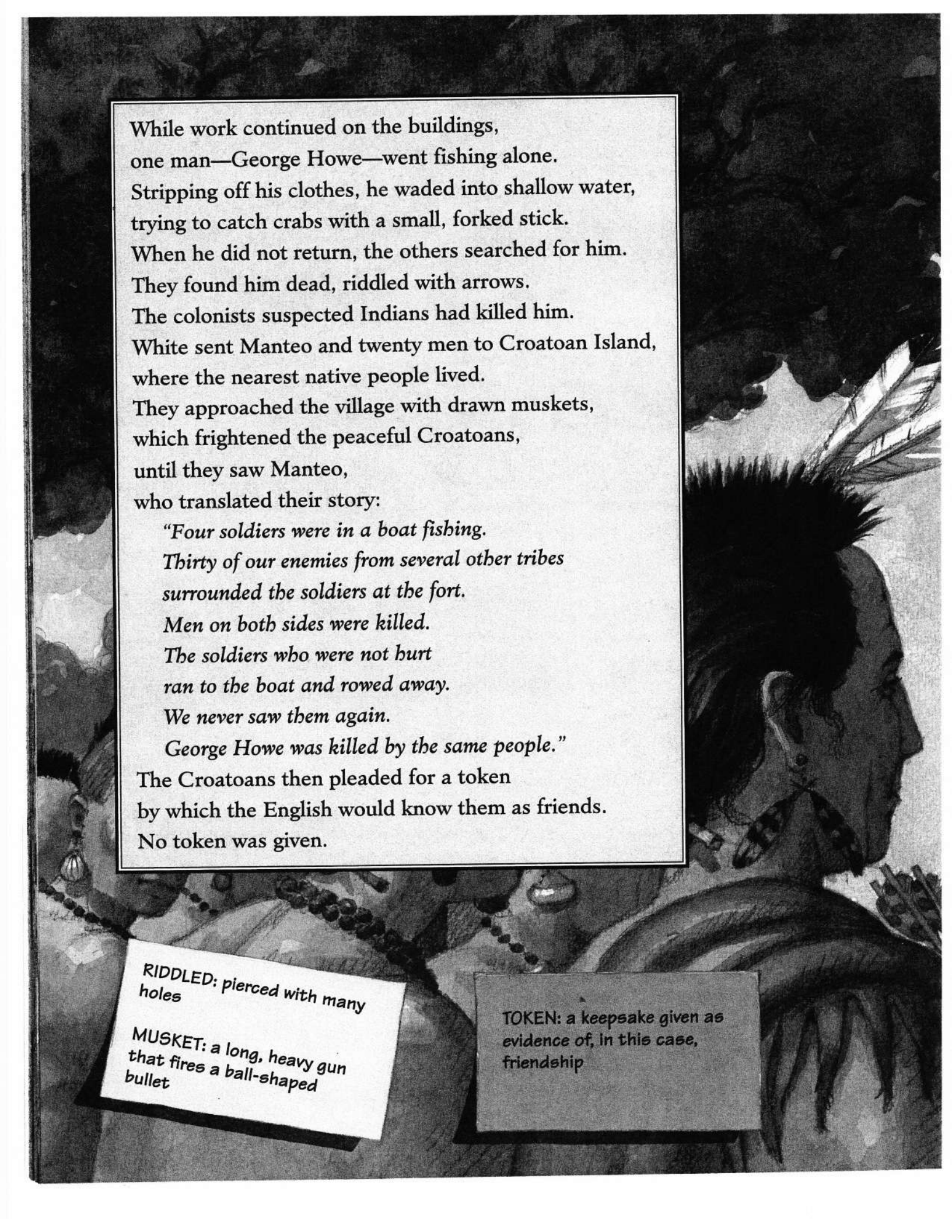
Some who washed their faces in the water had swollen eyes for five or six days after.

They captured five huge tortoises for meat—so large, sixteen men became exhausted hauling them back to the ship.



At last the flagship dropped anchor
outside Roanoke's shallow harbor.
White and forty of his men
planned to take the pinnace to shore
to meet with the soldiers,
then continue on to Chesapeake
where they were going to stay.
But the ship's pilot, Simon Fernandez, had other ideas.
He refused to take the colonists any farther
and put them all ashore at Roanoke.
When White and his men got to the fort
ahead of the larger group of colonists,
they found it razed.
Great melon vines grew in what remained of the houses.
Deer grazed there.
All that was left of the soldiers was a single skeleton.
"We must make the best of what we have," said White,
so they began to repair the houses.

RAZED: destroyed completely
by having been torn down



While work continued on the buildings,
one man—George Howe—went fishing alone.
Stripping off his clothes, he waded into shallow water,
trying to catch crabs with a small, forked stick.
When he did not return, the others searched for him.
They found him dead, riddled with arrows.
The colonists suspected Indians had killed him.
White sent Manteo and twenty men to Croatoan Island,
where the nearest native people lived.
They approached the village with drawn muskets,
which frightened the peaceful Croatoans,
until they saw Manteo,
who translated their story:

*"Four soldiers were in a boat fishing.
Thirty of our enemies from several other tribes
surrounded the soldiers at the fort.*

*Men on both sides were killed.
The soldiers who were not hurt
ran to the boat and rowed away.*

We never saw them again.

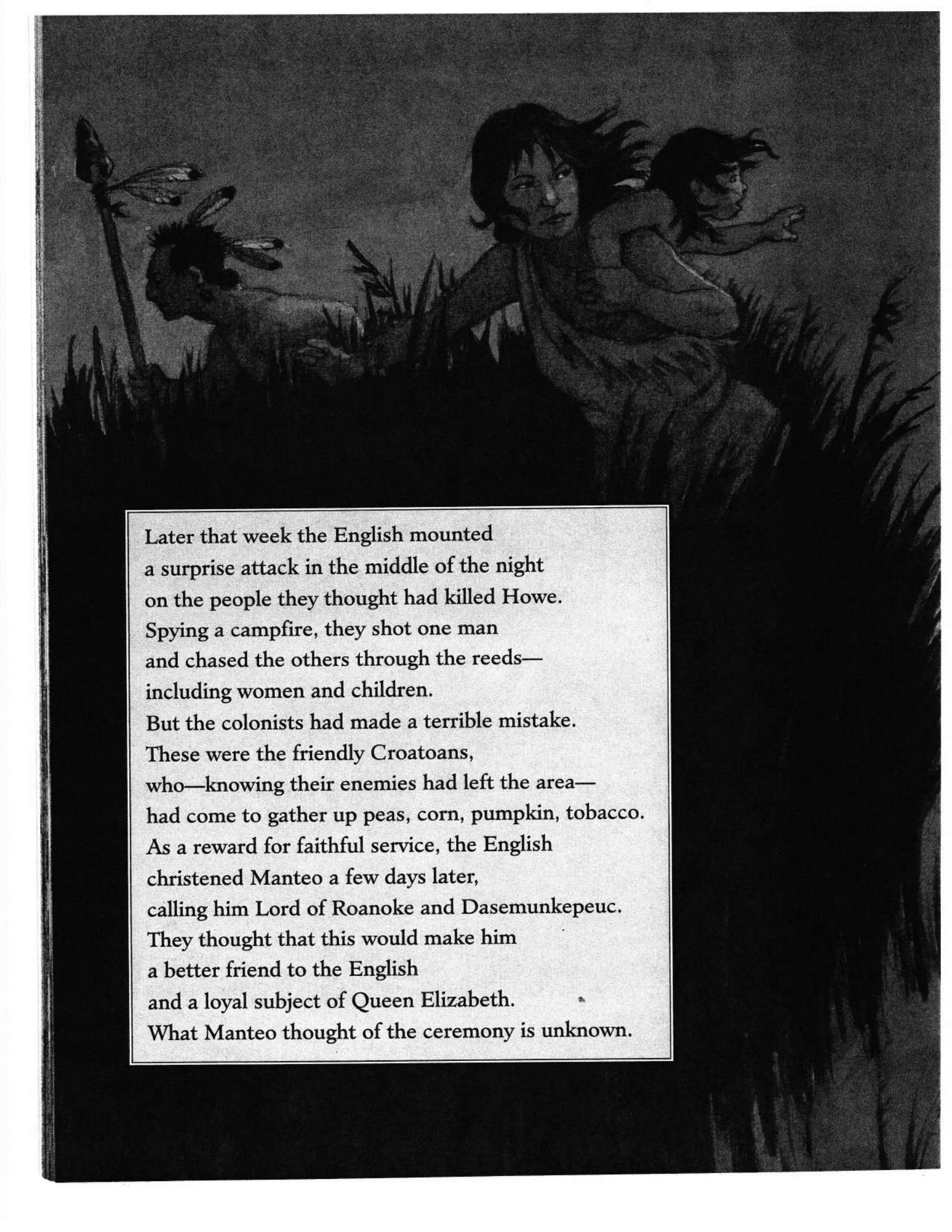
George Howe was killed by the same people."

The Croatoans then pleaded for a token
by which the English would know them as friends.
No token was given.

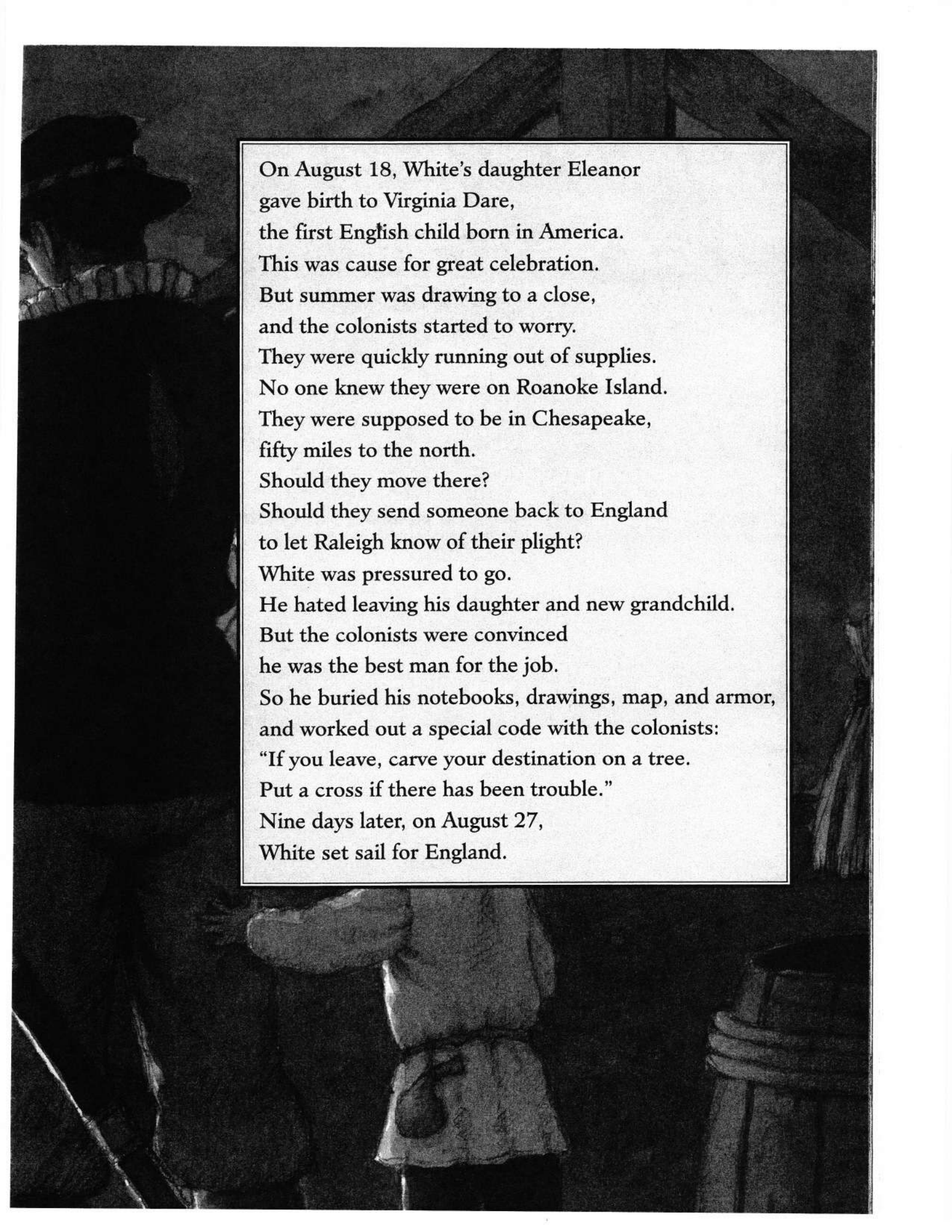
RIDDLED: pierced with many
holes

MUSKET: a long, heavy gun
that fires a ball-shaped
bullet

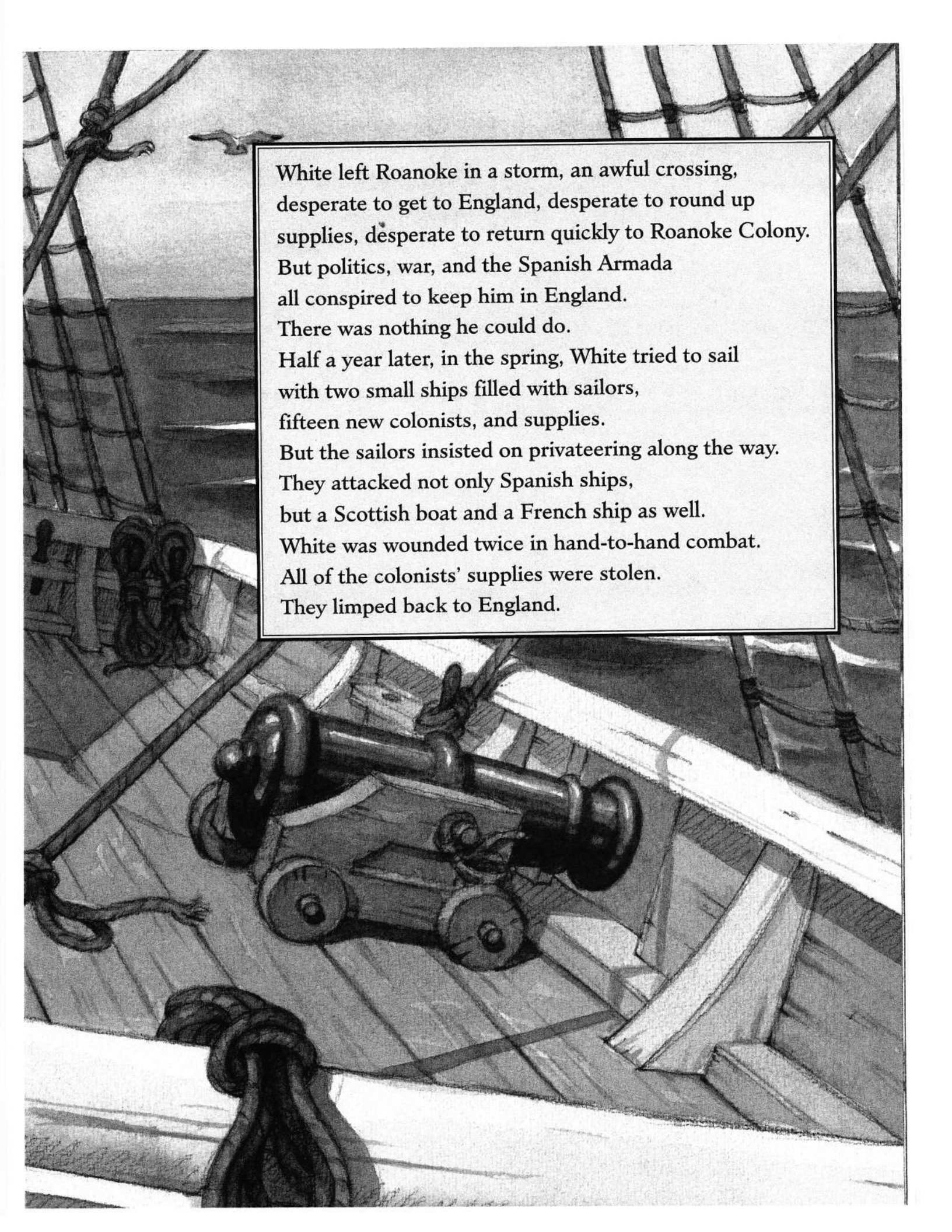
TOKEN: a keepsake given as
evidence of, in this case,
friendship



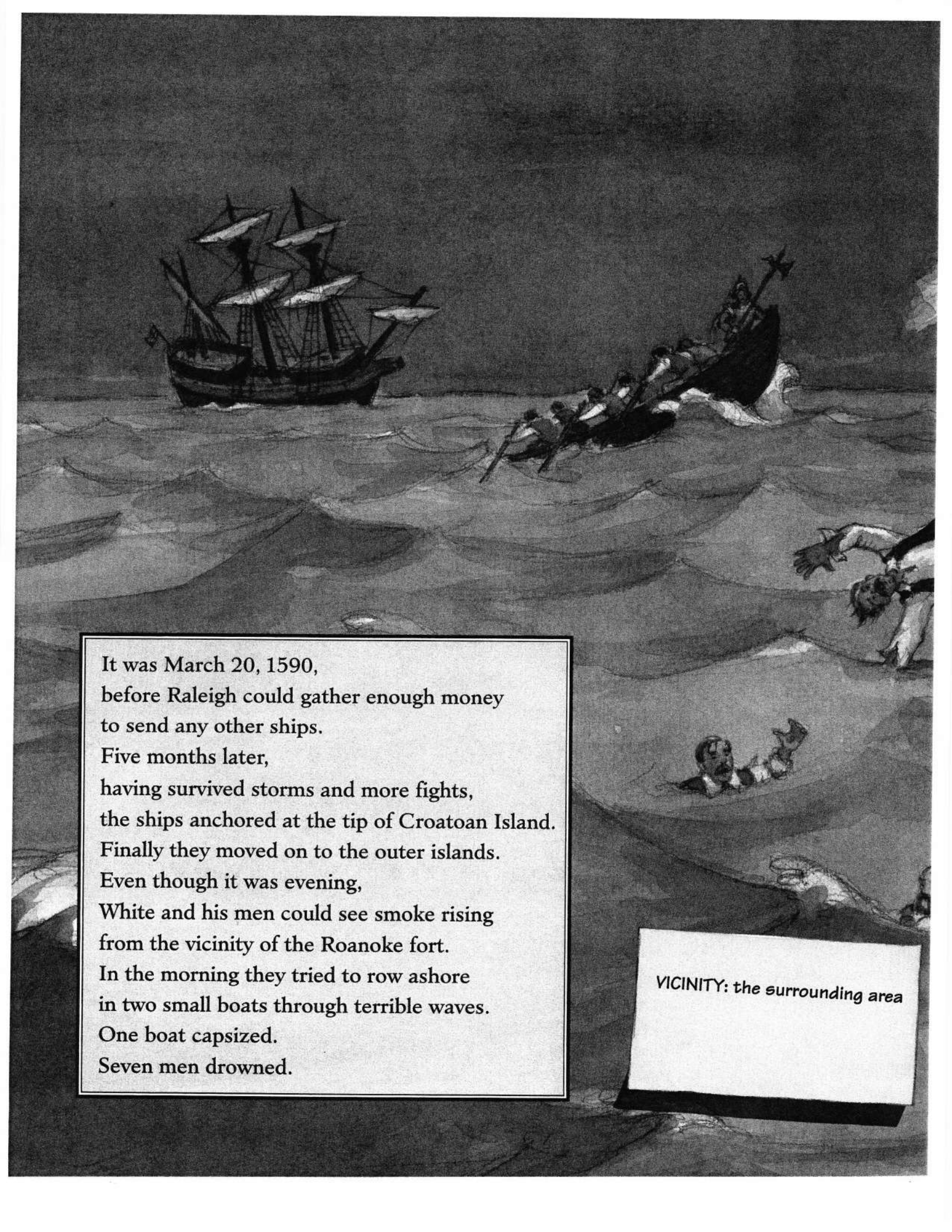
Later that week the English mounted a surprise attack in the middle of the night on the people they thought had killed Howe. Spying a campfire, they shot one man and chased the others through the reeds—including women and children. But the colonists had made a terrible mistake. These were the friendly Croatoans, who—knowing their enemies had left the area—had come to gather up peas, corn, pumpkin, tobacco. As a reward for faithful service, the English christened Manteo a few days later, calling him Lord of Roanoke and Dasemunkepeuc. They thought that this would make him a better friend to the English and a loyal subject of Queen Elizabeth. What Manteo thought of the ceremony is unknown.



On August 18, White's daughter Eleanor
gave birth to Virginia Dare,
the first English child born in America.
This was cause for great celebration.
But summer was drawing to a close,
and the colonists started to worry.
They were quickly running out of supplies.
No one knew they were on Roanoke Island.
They were supposed to be in Chesapeake,
fifty miles to the north.
Should they move there?
Should they send someone back to England
to let Raleigh know of their plight?
White was pressured to go.
He hated leaving his daughter and new grandchild.
But the colonists were convinced
he was the best man for the job.
So he buried his notebooks, drawings, map, and armor,
and worked out a special code with the colonists:
"If you leave, carve your destination on a tree.
Put a cross if there has been trouble."
Nine days later, on August 27,
White set sail for England.


A detailed black and white illustration of a ship's deck. In the foreground, a large wooden pulley system with multiple wheels is visible, connected by thick ropes. The deck is made of wooden planks, and various ropes and rigging are scattered across it. In the background, the ship's mast and rigging are visible against a cloudy sky. A small bird is flying in the upper left corner.

White left Roanoke in a storm, an awful crossing,
desperate to get to England, desperate to round up
supplies, desperate to return quickly to Roanoke Colony.
But politics, war, and the Spanish Armada
all conspired to keep him in England.
There was nothing he could do.
Half a year later, in the spring, White tried to sail
with two small ships filled with sailors,
fifteen new colonists, and supplies.
But the sailors insisted on privateering along the way.
They attacked not only Spanish ships,
but a Scottish boat and a French ship as well.
White was wounded twice in hand-to-hand combat.
All of the colonists' supplies were stolen.
They limped back to England.



It was March 20, 1590,
before Raleigh could gather enough money
to send any other ships.
Five months later,
having survived storms and more fights,
the ships anchored at the tip of Croatoan Island.
Finally they moved on to the outer islands.
Even though it was evening,
White and his men could see smoke rising
from the vicinity of the Roanoke fort.
In the morning they tried to row ashore
in two small boats through terrible waves.
One boat capsized.
Seven men drowned.

VICINITY: the surrounding area



Anchoring in the shallow harbor that night,
they tried to alert the colonists
by sounding a trumpet,
by singing English folk songs loudly,
by calling out to the people on shore.
There was no answer.

In the morning they went to the fort.
It was completely empty.

Carved into a tree near the village
were the letters CRO.

On one of the palisade posts
was the word CROATOAN.

There was no cross indicating any trouble.


All that they found inside the fort

were bars of iron, pigs of lead, iron shot.




Once-buried chests lay overturned, ransacked,
including White's own possessions.

The pinnacle used by the colonists was gone.

Weeds grew everywhere.



PALE: a high fence with large
set firmly in the ground
oblong masses of a particular
metal—in this case, lead
SHOT: pellets of iron that are
in a gun



John White returned to England.

Due to storms, politics, money, history,
he never set foot in the New World again.

But other explorers did.

John Smith, friend of Pocahontas,
heard from two Indian tribes that
“clothed men” still lived in the area.

Later, Pocahontas’s father admitted being part
of an attack on the colonists.

Smith did not speak of this
until fourteen years after returning to England.

Another explorer, William Strachey,
heard rumors in 1610 of Indians whose slaves
built them stone-walled houses.

Others heard stories of blond, blue-eyed natives.

Yet no such clothed men, slaves,
or blond natives were ever found.

Centuries later the Lumbee of North Carolina
claimed their ancestors were both Indian and English.

In 1998 archaeologists discovered an English signet ring,
on a dig in nearby Hatteras Island.

Could it have belonged to one of the lost colonists?

No one can really be sure.

ARCHAEOLOGIST: someone
who studies ancient
cultures, usually through
items found buried in the
ground

SIGNET RING: a ring with
initials or a family crest
engraved on it